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UNCLAS WARSAW 001204

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SUBJECT: POLISH PM PRESSES FOR JUNE ELECTIONS, DEFERS
ANNOUNCEMENT ON OWN FUTURE

REF: WARSAW 1126

1. (SBU) In a much-anticipated address March 3, Polish Prime Minister Marek Belka underscored his determination to seek the dissolution of parliament May 5, clearing the way for new elections June 19, but said that he would not decide on his own political future (i.e., whether to abandon the governing SLD for the nascent Democratic Party, or PD) until after the vote on dissolution. Following his address, Freedom Union (UW) leader and PD founding member Wladyslaw Frasyuniuk announced that he is now convinced that Belka will join PD, despite the lack of a clear statement from the prime minister. Belka also stated that the Polish referendum on the EU constitution should be held together with the first round of presidential elections September 26.

2. (SBU) Although Belka did not -- as some expected he would -- spell out his political plans, he did make clear that his sympathies are with the new centrist party. Belka explained that he was not surprised that PD organizers had invited him to join them, maintaining that he has tried throughout his own government's tenure to implement a program very close to that advocated by the PD founders. The prime minister praised PD for defending and being proud of what has been achieved in the past fifteen years, drawing a sharp contrast with the pessimistic vision of those on the right who argue for sweeping reforms.

3. (SBU) Belka argued forcefully that the parliament's term must be shortened, drawing attention to the already-heated political climate (he made his remarks immediately after participating in a boisterous parliamentary debate of a non-binding measure calling for his resignation) and its effect on the government's ability to advance its legislative agenda. He pledged to do everything he could to ensure that the parliament votes to dissolve itself on May 5. President Kwasniewski afterwards endorsed both the June parliamentary date and the proposal to hold the EU referendum together with the presidential vote.

4. (SBU) Comment: Belka's caution regarding his own intentions was to be expected, as he neither wants to provoke a reaction from the SLD, nor does he need to do more now than signal that he is disassociating himself from the governing party and lending moral support to this new centrist formation.

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